



PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Report to the 2008 Annual Town Meeting

A. Committee charge (in part):

"To evaluate the town's road, sidewalk, drainage, and traffic circulation and to recommend priorities for their maintenance, repair, extension, and reconstruction".

B. Streets:

The condition of Amherst's roads has deteriorated significantly over the past year.

Unfortunately, the cost of asphalt (a petroleum product) has risen dramatically in recent years while Chapter 90 appropriations (street repair funds from the state) haven't. Due to the budget cuts of the last few years, the DPW does not have enough money or manpower to adequately patch holes or do annual crack sealing – both activities that, if done correctly and promptly, greatly extend the life of a street surface. Taken together, this means that the Town is falling farther and farther behind in maintenance of roadway infrastructure. Under existing conditions, it does not seem likely that the Town will ever be able to “catch up.” Therefore, the committee has discussed potential alternative strategies, such as bundling a number of future years' worth of repairs together for a bond or debt exclusion override package, and has begun compiling a list of streets most in need of attention.

The committee bases its recommendations for street repair on information contained in the DPW's pavement management inventory of the condition of all town roads, supplemented by advice from Superintendent Guilford Mooring and personal observation and experience of committee members. Chapter 90 funding, which is reimbursed by the state, is approximately \$600,000 and may not be used for other elements of the Town's – or even the Department's – budget. The committee has established a policy of prioritizing arterial roadways over neighborhood side streets, given the rising cost of paving materials and traffic flow/traffic calming considerations that are impacted by road conditions. Where needed, the committee recommends that adjacent sidewalks be repaired or constructed – an allowed use of Chapter 90 funds.

The committee has recommended that the Select Board approve the following street repair schedule for fiscal year 2009:

- Resurface North Pleasant Street from Triangle Street to Massachusetts Avenue.
- Resurface Pelham Road from the bridge to Poet's Corner and, if funds allow, as far beyond that point eastward as possible.
- Apply final asphalt layer to Henry Street.
- Resurface University Drive from Big Y intersection to Route 9 and a small part of Snell Street.
- Complete all construction design work for repairs to Sand Hill Road and, if funds allow, repair drainage system on Sand Hill Road in anticipation of repaving in FY 09.

Projects tentatively scheduled for FY 10 (summer 2009) include the rest of Pelham Road, North Pleasant and East Pleasant Streets from Amity Street to Triangle Street, and Sand Hill Road.

C. Sidewalks:

The DPW's pavement management system also informs the committee's sidewalk maintenance recommendations, as does subjective analysis of existing foot traffic and adjacent vehicle traffic, with priority given to actual and potential commuting routes. Unfortunately, despite public demand for sidewalk infrastructure, these items have not been prioritized in the town's capital plan for several years, including FY 09, and because of manpower reductions may not be possible even if money were available.

The committee's standing recommendations for capital plan **sidewalk repair or maintenance** are as follows:

- East side of Triangle Street from Mattoon Street to Cottage Street.
- West side of Sunderland Road from Montague Road to Pine Street.
- East side of Lincoln Avenue from North Hadley Road to Fearing Street.
- Both sides of North Prospect Street from Amity Street to Hallock Street.
- South side of Strong Street from Maplewood Drive to Hills Road.

In addition, the committee has been considering new sidewalk construction from a backlog of requests and proposals made to the Town over the years and has recommended the following prioritized list of **new sidewalks** for the Town's capital plan, also unfunded again in FY 09:

- East side of South East Street from Colonial Village to house #136.
- North side of East Hadley Road from South Pleasant Street to house #41.
- East side of East Pleasant Street from Village Park to Eastman Lane.
- Missing section on Old Farm Road.

In the course of its work, the committee also discovered that some neighborhoods in the school district's designated walking zone do not have sidewalks, including some routes that necessarily follow busy or dangerous streets.

D. Other Business:

During Summer and Fall 2007, the committee participated in several public hearings on the **Atkins Corner** roadway realignment project and made a number of recommendations regarding safety and design.

In October 2007, the committee held a public hearing to review possible redesign of the **University Drive** corridor and endorsed the preferred engineering solution for the Big Y intersection, recommended proceeding with a multiple left-turn-lane design for the Amity Street intersection, and requested further study of the middle section.

E. Members:

- Stephen Braun, 549-2697
- Michael Cann, 253-7753
- Robert Crouner, 253-6526 (chair)
- Donald George, 253-7579
- Charles Moran, 549-5767
- Vincent O'Connor, 549-0810